

Jesus Teaches His Disciples Mark 9:30-48

by David Servant

Jesus teaches His disciples the importance of having a correct view of themselves and others, valuing 'lesser' believers, and including others rather than excluding them.

Topics: "Humility And Service", "Avoiding Sin"

Description

David Servant preaches on Jesus' teachings to His disciples about the importance of having a correct view of themselves and other believers. Jesus emphasized the need for humility and servanthood, warning against pride and selfish ambition. He highlighted the value God places on 'insignificant' people, such as children, and the severe consequences of causing them to stumble in their faith. Jesus also taught inclusivity, encouraging His followers to welcome and support others, rather than exclude them. While using hyperbole, Jesus stressed the seriousness of avoiding sin at all costs, even if it means removing things that cause us to stumble.

Transcript

As the time of His death drew nearer, Jesus began avoiding the crowds in order to spend time teaching His disciples. He knew that they would be the ones to carry on His work after His ascension, and He had a limited amount of time to get them ready.

If they were to succeed in doing Christ's work, it was of foremost importance that they have a correct view of themselves and other believers. God won't use people who think they're somebody important or who want to be somebody important. Proud or selfish people who want positions of respect disqualify themselves from Christ's ministry. Jesus wants us to consider ourselves servants, and see everyone else as being more important. Yet the disciples had been secretly arguing over who was the greatest! Jesus told them what we should all keep in mind: "Anyone who wants to be the first must take last place and be the servant of everyone else." In God's eyes, what makes people great is servanthood.

Jesus also needed to remind His disciples of the proper view they should have of other believers, especially "lesser" ones. God loves all of His children, and so all should be valued by us. Jesus took a little child in his arms, a person that very few others would even have noticed was present, and talked about how valuable he was. Children and other so-called "insignificant" people are often pushed aside, but according to Jesus, they shouldn't be. Jesus said that if we, as His representatives, take notice of and welcome a little child who believes in Him, we are actually welcoming Him. We are called to love people as God loves them, and this is the heart of being a follower of Christ.

On the other hand, because God loves people the world deems insignificant and unimportant, we are guilty of a great sin if we don't value them as God does. Jesus said that if anyone causes a child who believes in Him to lose faith, it would be better for that person to be thrown into the sea with a large millstone tied around his neck! Why? Because that would be a better fate than what will actually happen to the person who causes a believing child to lose faith---he will spend eternity in hell! That shows us how much God loves "unimportant" people.

John told Jesus about a man who was using Jesus' name to cast out demons, but because he wasn't part of their group, the disciples told him to stop. This gave Jesus another wonderful opportunity to continue adjusting His disciples' view of others as they prepared to take over His work on earth. Too often, we're looking for what makes people different from us so we can exclude them. Jesus, however, is looking for what is similar so He can include them! He told His disciples that they shouldn't have stopped the man from using His name to cast out demons, explaining that, "No one who performs miracles in my name will soon be able to speak evil of me" (Mark 9:39). We should adopt this same attitude, working to include people rather than exclude them, because that is how God feels. Jesus said that God will reward anyone who shows even a little support for one of His followers!

Q. Jesus said, "If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better to enter heaven with only one hand than to go into the unquenchable fires of hell with two hands....And if your eye causes you to sin, gouge it out. It is better to enter the Kingdom of God half blind than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, where the worm never dies and the fire never goes out" (Mark 9:43-44, 47-48). Did He really mean that people should cut off their hands and gouge out their eyes?

A. No, He must have been using a figure of speech we call hyperbole, or exaggerating to make a point unforgettable. Jesus couldn't have meant that people whose hands and eyes have caused them to sin should cut them off and gouge them out, because we all have hands and eyes that we have used to sin. If everyone literally obeyed Jesus on this, everyone in the world would be without hands and eyes. What Jesus was saying is that it is sin that sends people to hell, and so there is no price too high to pay to avoid sin. We should do what is necessary to avoid temptation, and if something is causing us to stumble, we need to remove it from our lives.

Application: Are you guilty of valuing other believers based on their age, their profession, their skin color or where they live? Is there anyone that you've been convicted about undervaluing? Will you change?

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